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C O N F I D E N T I A L ULAANBAATAR 000332

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/CM AND EAP/RSP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/17/2019

TAGS: PREL MARR MOPS MG

SUBJECT: MONGOLIA PROPOSES SUPPLEMENTAL AFGHAN DEPLOYMENT
AND INCREASED MILITARY COOPERATION

REF: ULAANBAATAR 329

Classified By: Political Section Chief Andrew Covington,
Reasons 1.4 (a), (b), and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his November 16-18 visit to Ulaanbaatar, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, James Schear, accompanied by the Charge and DATT, met key officials at the Ministries of Defense and of Foreign Affairs, including Defense Minister Bold and Foreign Minister Zandanshatar. Bold and other senior Mongolian military officials voiced a number of new proposals for military development and possible bilateral cooperation. In contrast, DASD Schear's meeting with newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs Zandanshatar was brief and far more formal, as the FM mostly restricted his remarks to a prepared statement expressing appreciation for our positive role in Mongolia's democratic transition and support for our efforts in Afghanistan. Zandanshatar also stated he worked with Ambassador Addleton when the latter was USAID director in Ulaanbaatar and looks forward to meeting him again. END SUMMARY.

MINISTRY OF DEFENSE

¶2. (C) At the Ministry of Defense November 17, Defense Minister Lu. Bold reiterated his support for U.S. operations against terrorist groups and expressed satisfaction regarding the level of cooperation to date. He described the just departed second deployment to Afghanistan tasked with fixed site security and the training of Afghan soldiers as a next step in fostering security ties. Of note, Bold proposed deploying small numbers of Mongolia's medical personnel to Afghanistan in support of U.S. efforts. In a subsequent meeting, Chief of General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces (MAF) Lieutenant General Byambajav expanded upon this. Although ultimately intended for UN peacekeeping operations in Chad and eventually Darfur at a Level II capacity, Byambajav expressed the hope that some medical personnel could integrate into U.S. combat medical units in Afghanistan and develop their capabilities..

¶3. (C) Byambajav stated his hope to develop more tactical mobility in the MAF through the establishment of a cavalry contingent in the West as well as the acquisition of C-130 aircraft from the U.S. for troop conveyance. Invoking

Mongolia's long equestrian history, Byambajav explained that horse riding soldiers were better able to navigate hilly terrain and could be of use in striking at terrorist cells in such environments. Byambajav recounted that the Russians had bought Mongolian horses for a mounted contingent in the Caucasus. He further suggested that such a western cavalry unit could be used for regional training purposes as well. He assented when Schear asked if the training might involve the Kazakhs, who also have contributed to recent U.S. military efforts. On the subject of C-130s, Byambajav insisted that the MAF could adequately maintain and use them despite the harsh environment.

¶ 14. (SBU) Lastly, Byambajav touched upon improving MAF training and research capacities. Citing the prominence of U.S. trained military officials in the MAF and his own such experience at U.S. Central Command in Tampa Florida, he expressed interest in increasing the number of slots available to the MAF through these programs. He furthermore stated the goal of establishing a local "lessons learned" center within the MAF to build upon the experience attained from their numerous international deployments.

¶ 15. (U) Schear also devoted time to greeting and expressing gratitude to Mongolian soldiers for their work in supporting U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and global peacekeeping operations. He personally bid farewell to the outbound Afghanistan contingent on November 16 from the airport, en route to provide fixed site security as well as training to the Afghan military in the use of old Soviet artillery. The following day Schear had lunch with Col. Ontsgoibayar and selected troops from the 150th Peacekeeping Battalion under his command, bound for Chad on November 20. Afterwards he visited the Five Hills Regional Training Center, which hosts numerous combined multinational training opportunities for peacekeepers.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

¶ 16. (C) DASD Schear also met with Foreign Minister Zandanshatar on November 17 (see reftel for details of Zandanshatar's November 12 appointment). The meeting was Zandanshatar's first as FM with a high-ranking visitor from Washington; he mostly kept to prepared remarks. The FM expressed appreciation for the role the United States plays in the building of democracy and a market economy in Mongolia, noting the significant growth in the bilateral relationship in last several years. He said Mongolian foreign policy is focused on long-term, balanced, and friendly relationships -- in particular the close partnerships with Mongolia's "third neighbors."

¶ 17. (C) Zandanshatar said Mongolia seeks a comprehensive partnership with the United States and that cooperation in the defense field has been fruitful. He thanked us for U.S. contributions to enhance Mongolia's defense capabilities and underscored that Mongolia is moving toward light and mobile armed units that are flexible in relief and peacekeeping situations -- noting that Mongolia is undertaking these changes as budget constraints allow.

¶ 18. (C) Zandanshatar stated that Mongolia welcomes and fully supports the new U.S. strategy in Pakistan and Afghanistan and is pleased to be sending additional troops to Afghanistan. He said Mongolia can be an example of a successful democracy for countries in central and northeast Asia.

¶ 19. (C) The FM noted he was close friends with Ambassador Addleton when the former worked on banking reform under USAID auspices. He said he looks forward to seeing the Ambassador after he arrives in Ulaanbaatar to take up his new assignment. Zandanshatar further stated that Mongolia can be considered a strategic partner and therefore wishes to evaluate and improve our bilateral cooperation.

¶10. (SBU) DASD Schear cleared this cable.
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